

Walker Cup Memories

By FRANCIS D. OUIMET

MEMBER, USGA WALKER CUP TEAM 1922-23-24-26-28-30-32-34;
CAPTAIN, 32-34-36-38-47-49

When George Herbert Walker conceived the idea of bringing together amateur golfers representing the USGA and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, he was hopeful of accomplishing two things. The first and most important was to have the players understand one another and thereby bring about a closer friendliness between the two great nations they represented. Secondly, by this close association in a sporting match they could better keep the standard of the game on the highest possible plane.

That his sound reasoning has borne fruit must be a source of great satisfaction to Mr. Walker. I know of no international contest that is played more keenly or with more consideration toward the opponent than the Walker Cup Matches.

Lloyd George's View

That the Matches serve a useful purpose can be emphasized by a remark made by Lloyd George in 1923 at a complimentary dinner given to the American Team at the House of Commons. Responding to a toast, the great British statesman arose and stated simply: "The two teams, British and American, in Walker Cup play could accomplish more good than all the statesmen in London and Washington put together."

Perhaps I should not repeat his words, but the fact remains in the 11 matches played to date, covering a period of 27 years, the competition has well proved its worth and, as a vehicle of good will, must take front rank as long as international amity is a desirous factor in our fast-changing world.

Someday a full history should be written of Walker Cup competition. Then ample attention could be given to the many players who have competed without stinting anybody. In this effort, I am

obliged because of time and space to mention only a few of the most prominent matches. Unfortunately, I must forego the foursome matches. Though they are fully as important in the final outcome as some of the singles, they are played first and their true value is sometimes overlooked in the enthusiasm that follows the concluding individual contests.

Yet I would be lacking in candor and fairness if I did not mention the great British foursome team of Cyril Tolley and Roger Wethered. In the early Twenties, they were about as fine a combination as one could ask for, and they gave their American opponents a hard day.

Nor can I soon forget the gallant show put on by Alec Hill and Cecil Ewing at Pine Valley in 1936 against George Voigt and Harry Givan. Voigt and Givan held a lead of 7 up with 11 to play. We had won the first two matches and the third had finished square, so a victory for the Americans would make the task of winning the cup a bit easier. The British pair, to their credit, never quit trying. One by one they cut into the seven-hole lead and at the 35th hole they had evened the match. The final hole was halved, so ended the match. To Ewing and Hill must go the laurel wreath for a remarkable recovery, the finest comeback in foursome play in Walker Cup competition.

Singles Decide Issue

However, the singles matches, coming as they do on the final day, really decide the issue. If one team falls behind in the foursome matches, of which there are four, that team must pull itself up by the bootstraps, so to speak, in the singles.

That happened to our side in 1923. We had lost three of the foursome matches, winning one. In the inaugural

event of 1922, the match between Jess Sweetser and Chubby Hooman was level at the end of 36 holes, and Hooman won out on the first extra hole. Since that time, any Walker Cup match which finishes square at the end of 36 holes is not continued. No points are awarded to either side.

A Stiff Assignment

Entering the singles in 1923, we were trailing, three points to one. Assuming that each match would be won or lost, this meant that the United States must win five of the individual contests to gain a tie. I was paired against Roger Wethered in the number one match. At the end of the morning round I was 2 down. Tolley was up on Jess Sweetser. Bob Gardner was having a close battle with Robert Harris. The late George Rotan was 6 down and four to play against Willis Mackenzie, but Rotan brought his match within reasonable bounds by winning the last four holes. Max Marston, who recently passed on, enjoyed a good lead. Dave Herron was winning, but generally speaking the team as a whole was in bad shape at the end of the morning round. I believe, taking our position at its worst, that at one time the American players were 24 holes in arrears, collectively speaking.

I made little headway against Wethered. Each time I seemed to be in a fair way to reduce his lead of two holes, he would hole a long putt. I had managed to cut his margin to a single hole as we came to the 14th, the 32nd hole of the match. That was a heart breaker. The 14th hole at St. Andrews, with all its subtleties, is difficult. Par is 5 although that day one could get up to the hole with two long shots. My second was just short of the green, and Roger's was on the back edge, at least 40 feet away. When I rolled my ball to within two feet of the hole, I felt reasonably certain that my good 4 would at the very least gain me a halved hole. Nothing of the kind happened. Wethered hit his long putt up over the slight incline right into the middle of the cup for a 3, and I was again 2 down.

The 15th was halved in 4s. Par on

the last three holes at St. Andrews would be 4-5-4. I won the 16th with a 3. We halved 17th in 4s. On the final hole, I was 18 feet from the cup on my second and Roger was several feet outside. He putted to within eight or ten inches from the hole and laid me a three-quarter stymie. The roll of the green favored me slightly in that there was a drift from right to left and his ball was on the low side. How my ball escaped his I will never know, but it just squeezed by, caught the high edge of the cup and fell in for a 3 to tie the match. I scored no point, but it was better than losing one.

From then on things began to happen. Sweetser was beaten by Tolley, but in succession Gardner, Rotan, Marston and Fred Wright won their matches to put us ahead 5 to 4. You will recall that, in the morning round, Rotan had been 6 down with four to play and had won the last four holes. In the afternoon he took seven of the first eight holes and finally won by 5 and 4. Wright was 2 down and three to play against Ernest Holderness and finished 3-4-3 to win by a hole.

If my memory serves me, Herron dissipated a useful lead against John Wilson and was beaten on the home green. The matches were even again at 5-all, with the last match on the course.

Doctor Willing was playing Willie Murray. I can remember but one thing regarding this match. We all rushed out to the 17th green. Thousands of persons were there. I do not recall whether the Doctor was 1 up and two to play or dormie 2. I do recall quite vividly that he had a nine-foot putt to end the match and give us victory. He was a good man in such a spot. From the moment he hit his ball, there was no doubt but what it was going to find the hole rim. We had beaten a fine team the hard way, and as far as I am concerned the 1923 Walker Cup Match was the greatest that has ever been played, up to now.

Moe's Comeback

There have been other exciting moments, too. Those of us who played at Sandwich in 1930 will never forget the performance of Don Moe. In his match

First Match for the Walker Cup



The young Bobby Jones, then 20, attempts a difficult putt during his No. 2 singles contest against Roger H. Wethered in the first Match for the Walker Cup at the National Golf Links of America, Southampton, Long Island, on August 29, 1922. Jones defeated Wethered, 3 and 2, and went unbeaten in five Walker Cup singles contests. The USGA Team also won this first Match, 8 to 4.

against J. A. (Bill) Stout, he was 4 down after the morning round. Stout had had a 68. After luncheon Bill started 3-3-3 and was 7 up. He was still seven holes to the good with 13 to be played. Don got every one of those seven holes back and, standing on the 18th teeing ground, the match was even. Moe hit a long iron three feet from the hole after a good tee shot and won the match by a hole. That is in the record book but two things are not.

The record does not state that Moe's final round was played in 67. Neither does it mention Bill Stout's classic remark. Removing his spiked shoes in the locker room, Bill said, with no display of disappointment or irreverence, "That was not golf; that was a visitation from the Lord."

Then there was the match at The Country Club, Brookline, Mass., in 1932. On September 2 that year the sun was in total eclipse. That is not important insofar as a Walker Cup Match is concerned, but both events made it an unusual day. It was hot and humid. Not a leaf on the many fine trees that grow on that course moved for hours. Instead of the usual lovely green fairways and putting greens and trees, there was a golden haze that

made one feel just a little bit eerie. I know I felt that way.

In any event, some of us who had finished the morning end of our matches were having lunch. The Walker Cup itself was reposing calmly on a rock behind the 18th green, where Harry Vardon sat in 1913 for a picture.

Leonard Crawley, the splendid British sportsman, was competing against George Voigt. One has to play a forcing shot to the 18th green at The Country Club because there is a network of traps guarding the green in front. Leonard was going to be up at any cost, and he banged an iron with great firmness, hoping, I suppose, to hit the back edge of the green. He hit his shot altogether too well. The ball landed on the road directly in back of the green and on the first bounce struck the Walker Cup full on. It was like the old dinner gong ringing at 12 noon.

It seemed to me there was a noticeable dent in the famous trophy, although I may be wrong. The last time I was near enough to examine the Cup, it was in perfect condition. If the dent had been removed, more is the pity because for historic reasons if nothing else it would have been just as well to allow it to

remain. It would add greatly to the tradition of the competition. My memory, though, is somewhat hazy as to whether the Cup actually was dented or not.

Crawley Dents Cup

Leonard Crawley is regarded as a great games player by the British. A brilliant cricketer, he took up golf several years after his university days. Long hours of practice and close application made him a splendid golfer. He was extremely popular with the American boys, and I am very fond of him.

In 1934 we sent a team to St. Andrews. To pass away the time, most of the Americans gathered in our private living room after dinner to play a little game of hearts, well known to most Americans. The night before the foursome matches, we gathered around the table as usual. A knock came on the door and in walked Leonard. After the usual introductions, we invited him to participate. He knew the game of hearts and accepted. He sat next to me. Invariably on the deal I would find the queen of spades in my allotment, and at the proper moment I would present it to Leonard. (The queen of spades carries a high penalty if you happen to get caught with it in your hand at the conclusion of play.) Leonard was most unlucky, although the stakes were small, in holding the infamous queen. We all enjoyed the evening immensely and Leonard proved himself to be a fine sport as well as a real addition to the party.

With the foursome matches behind us, it was my duty to place our singles line-up in a sealed envelope, and send it to the Royal and Ancient Club at a given hour. The British Captain did the same. The sealed envelopes were opened and the pairings were turned over to the press. I had put myself in the number three position and you can well imagine my surprise and pleasure to learn that my opponent in the singles match was to be Leonard Crawley.

I must say things broke well for me and badly for Leonard during the morning round, and I was able to go to the luncheon table with a fair lead.

Two good putts at the start of the afternoon round increased my margin. With nine holes remaining, I was well ahead. Leonard, still fighting, drove the 10th green, which measured 310 yards, and won the hole with a 3. I missed the iron to the Eden, and it was his hole with a par 3. On the 12th he pitched stone dead for another winning 3. I did manage to halve the 13th with a 4, but Leonard barely missed a 10-footer for his fourth successive 3. I was now dormie 5.

Queen of Spades

Lawson Little and Tolley had carried a huge gallery in the match ahead, and when Little defeated Tolley, their gallery picked us up. Leonard played two great shots to the back of the 14th green and was in a fair way to win the hole and keep the match alive. I was on the putting surface in three, about 15 feet from the hole. Leonard played a fine approach putt to within three feet. I putted rather cautiously down the slippery slope and my ball stopped on the very edge of the hole, directly in front of Leonard's three-footer. He studied every possibility of holing his ball. I had laid him a complete stymie. After looking the thing over from every conceivable angle, he turned to me and said; "What is that Francis, the bloody queen of spades?" Who but a grand sportsman could think of such a remark at such a time?

Those are the incidents surrounding Walker Cup play that make it a wonderful event. That our Teams up to now have been eminently successful is beside the point. Someday the tide will turn, and when it does, I hope and trust that our players will prove themselves to be sportsmen of the same quality as the British.

It is nice to be a member of a winning Walker Cup team. There is a great deal of personal satisfaction in this. But the friendships gained seem to me to be worth ever so much more than winning a Walker Cup. That I believe is what George Herbert Walker hoped for when he donated the trophy, and I sincerely wish that this same thought will be carried on, to perpetuity.